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WILDLIFE SERVICES—CONNECTICUT

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Connecticut

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Connecticut Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Connecticut is a diverse ecological mix of urban, suburban, and rural settings with 3.2 million residents. Connecticut has a broad economic base from technology, industry, and education to agriculture and aquaculture. The State has a remarkably diverse and growing wildlife population, increasing the likelihood of conflicts with the public.

WS provides agricultural assistance primarily to dairy farmers and vegetable farmers to prevent damage by Canada geese and blackbirds. WS also assists the public when they experience property damage caused by gulls, pigeons, woodpeckers, and bats. In addition, the program helps to reduce bacterial contamination of drinking water caused by gulls and geese. To protect the safety of air travelers, WS reduces hazards associated with wildlife at airports. WS has worked with State and Federal agencies in preparing contingency plans for the control of West Nile virus, and WS biologists help



to protect endangered shorebirds from predation by other birds and mammals.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Air Travel—Wildlife strikes with airplanes cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$470 million annually and pose a hazard to flight crews, passengers, and aircraft. WS biologists provide training, wildlife hazard assessments, and direct wildlife management assistance at Connecticut airports through partnerships with Federal and State agencies and airport management. In fiscal year (FY) 2001, Connecticut WS conducted cooperative wildlife damage management programs at one State-run airport and provided technical assistance to seven civilian airports. In addition, WS conducts two wildlife hazard management workshops in Connecticut each year for airport personnel.

WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research from its Sandusky, OH field station to reduce wildlife hazards to aircraft and the public. Studies are underway at several large airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques. NWRC also maintains the National Wildlife

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting civilian and military aircraft and passengers from wildlife collisions
- Evaluating and monitoring the threat of West Nile virus to Connecticut citizens
- Protecting shellfish and fish hatcheries from bird damage
- Protecting threatened and endangered shorebirds from predation
- Reducing the threat of birds transmitting salmonella to dairy cattle.

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Connecticut:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Reducing blackbird damage at feedlots
- Evaluating waterfowl as disease, parasite, and noxious weed reservoirs
- Managing predators through new methods to protect livestock and wildlife
- Improving assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management

Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species that pose the greatest concern to aviation.

Protecting Human and Livestock Health—As wildlife populations grow, the threat of transmitting wildlife-borne diseases to humans and livestock increases. West Nile virus entered Connecticut in 1999, presenting serious health risks to the public. WS is developing a protocol in conjunction with other Federal and State agencies to monitor and control the spread of West Nile virus. The program is also actively involved in a research and surveillance program targeting this disease.

Connecticut WS has also conducted a program in cooperation with the Connecticut Extension System to manage starlings at dairy farms. These starlings contaminate feed and water and have the potential to infect cattle with salmonella. Cattle infected with salmonella abort their calves, stop eating, lose weight, and reduce milk production. Farmers participating in the WS program have seen significant improvement in the quality of their cattle and milk production once the starlings were managed.

Protecting Personal Property—Connecticut's Canada goose population has been increasing for the past 30 years and continues to be a major wildlife problem. Nearly 45 percent of public requests for WS assistance in Connecticut involve property damage caused by Canada geese. Many of the traditional management methods, however, have lost effectiveness in light of growing goose populations. NWRC is working to develop more socially acceptable and effective management methods. Connecticut WS recommends the use of integrated wildlife damage management where several effective methods are used in combination to manage goose damage. Examples include, habitat management, exclusion, harassment, and repellants. Connecticut WS specialists currently conduct integrated programs with towns and homeowner associations to prevent goose eggs from hatching. This significantly slows goose population growth.

Other species that cause serious property damage in Connecticut include gulls, crows, and woodpeckers. In FY 2001, WS conducted 68 consultations and evaluations in order to provide recommendations on the issuance of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) depre-



dition permits. This service was provided at no charge to the cooperators or FWS.

Looking to the Future

While WS provides the citizens of Connecticut with safe, effective, and humane assistance for a variety of wildlife conflicts, some challenges remain. WS is increasingly only able to respond to wildlife damage requests for assistance from entities willing and able to enter into cooperatively-funded agreements.

Preventing wildlife-borne diseases from affecting humans and livestock has become a growing concern in Connecticut as well. Recent outbreaks of rabies, West Nile virus, salmonella, and E. Coli have come to the attention of public health officials seeking assistance. Groups such as the Connecticut Extension System, Connecticut Department of Public Health, and town governments have expressed a greater need for wildlife damage management.

Finally, increased travel at Connecticut airports, coupled with the population growth of many bird species, have created a growing need for airport managers to work cooperatively with WS to deal with safety threats posed by wildlife.

Connecticut Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

